

GOSSIP OF THE RACETRACK

FRIENDS OF RACING CRITICISE AGNEW-HART BILLS.

In the interest of poolrooms, many say—Bookmakers' Lawyers Declare Proposed Law Could Not Be Enforced—Plea for the Turf by an Australian.

The friends of racing in the State of New York will be disappointed in the Agnew-Hart bills which will be defeated in the Senate at Albany when a final vote is reached next Wednesday. Men who have made a study of these bills say they will be a detriment to the poolrooms in such a way that in the event of their passing city gambling dives would spring up in greater numbers than ever before. Men identified with the racing game say they have proof that the poolroom syndicate has spent thousands of dollars in the present fight against the tracks and that the syndicate also has imposed upon it will meaning persons who have been unusually energetic in helping the crusade along.

W. C. Percy, the lawyer of the Percy-Grey law and a well known law firm in New York City, has pointed out that the Agnew-Hart bills are wholly in the interest of the poolrooms. Mr. Percy has shown that the bills provide that a keeper of a poolroom under the proposed legislation would be guilty of a misdemeanor, while a bookmaker operating at the track would be guilty of a felony if he registered wages and would be sent to the penitentiary for not more than one year. Mr. Percy has pointed out that in the case of poolroom keepers because of their conducting business under cover it would be a difficult matter to secure the necessary evidence, while at the track bookmakers could be apprehended easily if they continued their present methods.

In short, Mr. Percy feels sure that the passage of the Agnew-Hart bills would do more harm than good, for the reason that they would destroy a vast industry, while they would not put a stop to, but rather would increase poolroom gambling—an evil which the Jockey Club did more in the last year than the bookmakers have done in the last two years.

Former Chief of Police William S. Devery, who knows something about poolrooms, also has expressed the opinion that the Agnew-Hart bills could not have been framed for better results than those desired by the crusaders. Devery says that if the bills pass there will be poolrooms and handbooks in all parts of New York City doing business on the race track at tracks in other States. Devery says the Jockey Club did more in the last two years to kill the poolrooms than anybody else and that in retaliation the poolroom men, led by professional reformers from other States, have worked up the present sentiment against racing.

If necessary the names of scores of poolroom men who were forced out of business by the Jockey Club will be put on a list and the names of the tracks which were closed will be put on a list. It is a fact that some of these men, whose names are known, opened their rooms last November and have done business all winter long. In fact, some of the tracks have been closed for some time and are prepared to begin at Aqueduct on April 15 unless the Agnew-Hart bills become a law.

Racing men point to the additional fact that all of the court cases made out against the trackmen since the passage of the Agnew-Hart law in 1935 have been backed by poolroom men, more particularly by Peter De Lacy, whose attorney, the late Benjamin Steinhardt, spent years in fighting the Jockey Club. De Lacy can be found to-day who says that the Jockey Club has been the cause of the tracks for twelve years and is in the thick of the present struggle, a statement of repeated but so far unheeded by De Lacy.

In discussing the probable results of the proposed new anti-betting law, few have taken the trouble to secure the views of some of the leading bookmakers. These men in a majority of cases have consulted counsel and have been advised that while the Agnew-Hart bills cover racetrack speculation with the provision that the registering of a bet constitutes a felony, it is a difficult matter, when the courts are asked to decide, to produce conclusive proof that bets have been made.

"What is a bet?" says George Conidine, a bookmaker, yesterday. Will a Magistrate or a Grand Jury decide that a bet has been made if a man has been put up and the man who backs a horse to win receives no token in the shape of a ticket from a bookmaker? As I understand it, a man who bets on the races, or in other words on a horse to win, is not liable for the bet. The bet is made by the Agnew bill, but a bookmaker who writes down a bet is guilty of a felony. In this case the bookmaker simply bets that a horse does not win. Then why should he be more liable than a man who backs a horse to finish first?

"In my opinion the proposed law would be a farce, for the reason that it could not be enforced. It would destroy the splendid system of speculation at the tracks where the public is protected against loss, but it would not destroy betting, which is the real evil, which would bring into the game dishonest men who would swindle persons right and left. No matter how you look at the matter it seems as if such a bill would do all kinds of harm. You cannot stop betting and gambling by the proposed legislation. The people who insist upon playing the horses will have ample opportunity to do so if the tracks close up."

"Richard Canfield, who pleaded guilty to the charge of keeping a gambling house here, where millions of dollars have been lost, said \$100,000," said another bookmaker. "He didn't go to jail. But this Agnew bill would jail anybody who marks down a bet on his program at the racetrack. Does anybody believe that a jury of American citizens would send a man to the Blackbird State Penitentiary to wear stripes because he made a bet on a horse race and recorded it? Should the bill pass, would as much care be exacted in enforcing it at glove fights, boat races and other outdoor events which always cause betting at the tracks?"

"Such a bill would throw more than fifteen thousand men out of employment," said Timothy D. Sullivan yesterday. "It would ruin many a man's home and welfare besides destroying millions of dollars of property and depriving the metropolitan public of a harmless outdoor amusement. There is not a popular demand for the suppression of racing and betting, and I believe that the bill will be beaten when the legislators realize what harm this measure will cause."

A visitor here last week was W. A. Craven of Australia, for twenty years Deputy Speaker of the Victorian Parliament. Mr. Craven said that racing in Australia, as in England, France, Germany and other foreign countries, is virtually under the auspices of the Government and that betting is legal and is not considered to be a crime. He said that the Government has a monopoly in the sale of liquor and betting and that the sale of liquor and betting are proper, and the several States of Australia have enacted legislation with this end in view. There is no better governed country in the world, he believes. It is next to impossible to get a drink in the principal cities of Australia on Sunday, and where a few years ago gambling was carried on in many places it has now been stamped out. There is a difference, however, between racing and betting on the races, and the legislative bodies of Australia have recognized this fact.

"On all the race courses of Australia betting is permitted on the day's racing and the sport is patronized by the best people of the country, including high officials and legislators. It is a national sport. Australia takes a national pride in her thoroughbred racing and the Government is doing everything

it can to foster and encourage the breeding of this noble animal. It has been one of the purposes of the law to encourage the breeding of the low dives and gambling dens have been wiped out at the expense of the racecourses which have been placed on a high plane and has proved to be a benefit rather than a detriment to society."

There should be some fair sport at Bennington today, as all of the events have filled well. Platters will run in the first race, at seven furlongs, with Azure Maid, Kempton and Al H. Woods having chances. In the second race, for two-year-olds, four furlongs, the Blakes, entry, Court Lady, Witches Hour and Miss Granville will be played to beat Dan de Noies, Balbek and others. In the third race, at six furlongs, Jubilee, Panrouse and Oxford look best. Fillies and mares will run in the fourth event, at five furlongs, with Nanno, Laughing Eyes and Tea Leaf perhaps the best. In the fifth race, at a mile, Redmoss, Lally and Littleton Maid figure well. In the last race, a handicap at seven and a half furlongs, King of Aslan, Animal and Smoker should go well. The only colts follow:

First Race—Selling, for three-year-olds and upward, seven furlongs:
 1. Water Bridge, 100
 2. Ferry Landing, 80
 3. Azure Maid, 100
 4. Court Lady, 100
 5. Witches Hour, 100
 6. Miss Granville, 100
 7. Dan de Noies, 100
 8. Balbek, 100
 9. Jubilee, 100
 10. Panrouse, 100
 11. Oxford, 100
 12. Fillies and mares, 100
 13. Nanno, 100
 14. Laughing Eyes, 100
 15. Tea Leaf, 100
 16. Redmoss, 100
 17. Lally, 100
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